NATIONAL SECURITY DECISION
DIRECTIVE NUMBER

U.S. Space Launch Strategy

I. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE The CHALLENGER accident demonstrated the risk of relying on any single space launch system for all U.S. access to space. This directive is aimed at recovering from the immediate consequences of the accident and at reconstituting a sound national space launch capability to support the U.S. goals in space as defined in NSDD-42. Accordingly, its objectives are : (1) to recover from the interruption in space launch operations efficiently and as quickly as consistent with safety, and (2) to rebuild a more balanced and flexible national space launch capability, largely independent of possible failures in a single system.

Previous directives, specifically NSDD 42, 80, 94, 144, 164, 181 and related Executive Orders remain valid, except as specifically modified by this directive.

II. NATIONAL SPACE LAUNCH CAPABILITY The U.S. national space launch capability will be based on a balanced mix of launchers, consisting of the Space Transportation System (STS) and expendable launch vehicles (ELVs). The elements of this mix will be defined to best support the mission needs of all three sectors of U.S. space activities: national security, civil and commercial. Critical mission needs will be supported, whenever possible, by both the STS and the ELVs so as to provide added assurance that they can be launched regardless of specific launch vehicle availabilities.

A. Civil Space Transportation The unique STS (Shuttle) capability to provide routine manned access to space must be exploited in those areas that offer the greatest national return. The STS fleet will be reconstituted to maintain the Nation's capability to support critical programs. NASA will emphasize exploiting the unique capabilities of the Shuttle as well as supporting civil research and development programs.

Implementation: NASA will procure a replacement STS orbiter, structural spares and other lost equipment in an expeditious and cost-effective manner. NASA will establish safe and sustainable flight rates to provide for planning and budgeting of Government space programs. The recommendations of the President's Commission on the Causes of the CHALLENGER Accident will be considered and incorporated as appropriate.

B. National Security Space Transportation The national security space sector will use both the STS and the ELVs as determined by specific mission requirements. Selected critical payloads will be designed for dual-compatibility, i.e., capable of being launched by both the STS and the ELVs. Provisions will be made for additional ELV launch facilities needed to support the full range of orbits required by the national security missions.

Implementation: The DoD will procure additional ELVs as necessary to maintain a balanced launch capability and to provide a more assured access to space. The DoD will implement assured mission capability in payload / launch vehicle compatibility and scheduling, and establish a launch capability for ELVs at both the East and West Coast launch sites.

C. Commercial Space Transportation Consistent with Administration policy to encourage and facilitate a domestic ELV industry, the STS will not compete for providing launch services for commercial and foreign satellites that do not require manned presence.

Implementation:

The Economic Policy Council will develop the method and schedule to implement this policy. It will report its recommendations to the Senior Interagency Group for Space within 60 days from the date of this directive.

III. REVISION

This directive will be revised if it becomes acknowledged that the STS will not recover operational status before January 30, 1988.

NATIONAL SECURITY DECISION
DIRECTIVE NUMBER

U.S. Space Launch Strategy

I. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE The CHALLENGER accident demonstrated the risk of relying on any single space launch system for all U.S. access to space. This directive is aimed at recovering from the immediate consequences of the accident and at reconstituting a sound national space launch capability to support the U.S. goals in space as defined in NSDD-42. Accordingly, its objectives are : (1) to recover from the interruption in space launch operations efficiently and as quickly as consistent with safety, and (2) to rebuild a more balanced and flexible national space launch capability, largely independent of possible failures in a single system.

Previous directives, specifically NSDD 42, 80, 94, 144, 181 and related Executive Orders remain valid, except as specifically modified by this directive, which supersedes NSDD-164.

II. NATIONAL SPACE LAUNCH CAPABILITY The U.S. national space launch capability will be based on a balanced mix of launchers, consisting of the Space Transportation System (STS) and expendable launch vehicles (ELVs). The elements of this mix will be defined to best support the mission needs of all three sectors of U.S. space activities: national security, civil and commercial. Critical mission needs will be supported, whenever possible, by both the STS and the ELVs so as to provide added assurance that they can be launched regardless of specific launch vehicle availabilities.

A. Civil Space Transportation The unique STS (Shuttle) capability to provide routine manned access to space must be exploited in those areas that offer the greatest national return. The STS fleet will be reconstituted to maintain the Nation's capability to support critical programs. NASA will emphasize exploiting the unique capabilities of the Shuttle as well as supporting civil research and development programs.

Implementation: NASA will procure a replacement STS orbiter, structural spares and other lost equipment in an expeditious and cost-effective manner. NASA will establish safe and sustainable flight rates to provide for planning and budgeting of Government space programs. The recommendations of the President's Commission on the Causes of the CHALLENGER Accident will be considered and incorporated as appropriate.

B. National Security Space Transportation The national security space sector will use both the STS and the ELVs as determined by specific mission requirements. Selected critical payloads will be designed for dual-compatibility, i.e., capable of being launched by both the STS and the ELVs. Provisions will be made for additional ELV launch facilities needed to support the full range of orbits required by the national security missions.

Implementation: The DoD will procure additional ELVs as necessary to maintain a balanced launch capability and to provide a more assured access to space. The DoD will implement assured mission capability in payload / launch vehicle compatibility and scheduling, and establish a launch capability for ELVs at both the East and West Coast launch sites.

C. Commercial Space Transportation Consistent with Administration policy to encourage and facilitate a domestic ELV industry, the STS will be phased out from providing launch services for commercial and foreign satellites that do not require manned presence.

Implementation:

The Economic Policy Council will develop the method and schedule to implement this policy. It will report its recommendations to the Senior Interagency Group for Space within 60 days from the date of this directive.

III. REVISION

This directive will be revised if it becomes acknowledged that the STS will not recover operational status before January 30, 1988.